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SUBJECT: KABUL UNIVERSITY REQUESTS EXCHANGE WITH AL-AZHAR
UNIVERSITY

[1](#)1. (U) This cable includes an action request, para 5.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The chancellor of Kabul University and the dean of the University's Shari'a Faculty both made clear their desire to revive and intensify relations with Egyptian universities, particularly Al-Azhar, during separate meetings with the Deputy Ambassador on September 17. Chancellor Hamidullah Amin requested assistance in promoting an exchange between Kabul University and Al-Azhar University, in which students from Afghanistan would study in Egypt, and professors from Al-Azhar would teach at Kabul University. He emphasized his University's preference that students be sent specifically to Egypt, and not to Saudi Arabia or Iran.

[1](#)3. (U) Approximately forty professors in the Shari'a Faculty, including Professor Din Mohammad Gran, dean of the faculty, expressed their overwhelming support for an exchange program between Al-Azhar and Kabul Universities. Many boasted of their own studies in Egypt, as they spoke, often in Egyptian Arabic, on the application of Shari'a law in Afghanistan. They drew numerous comparisons between the implementation of Shari'a and civil law in Egypt and Afghanistan.

[1](#)4. (U) We currently have programs in USAID, PAS, and INL that could extend support for an expanded relationship between Al-Azhar and Kabul universities. A strong judicial system with well-educated judges and lawyers is key to creating a peaceful Afghanistan. Enabling more Afghan university students to study with Al-Azhar scholars, preferably in Kabul for greater impact, will help strengthen the foundation upon which the Afghan legal system stands.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Action: We request Embassy Cairo to sound out the president of Al-Azhar University on further cooperation with Kabul University. If Azhar scholars are willing to teach at Kabul University's Sharia Faculty, we may be able to support such faculty exchanges in substantial but appropriately discreet ways. (Note that such an exchange would be entirely distinct from other Egyptian-Afghan programs at the secondary level, which were discussed during SRAP Holbrooke's visit to Cairo in July.) We gather that, if the president or other academic leaders of Al-Azhar should wish to see for themselves security and other conditions at Kabul University before making any commitments, Kabul University Chancellor Hamidullah Amin would be nd an invitation to visit his attractive and lively campus.

EIKENBERRY